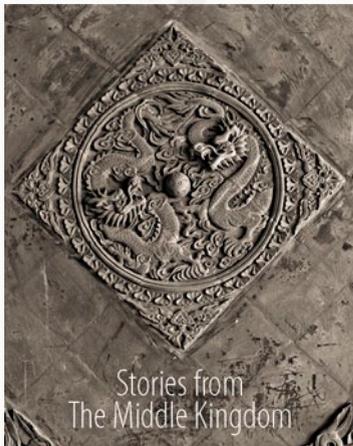




SKETCHES

*A Chapbook Series by
Brooks Jensen*



Stories from
The Middle Kingdom

Longquan Swords

Brooks Jensen

Brooks Jensen



What do I know about swords? To me, a sword was usually a short stick I picked up somewhere on my way to becoming a pirate or a musketeer as I walked to my friend's house before school. No Hattori Hanzō blades of steel for me—just a stick and a make believe bad guy to vanquish in my imagination.

But, swords—actual weapons—are real things, made by real people, crafted from real materials. I know that now, too, from first-hand experience when I had an opportunity to photograph the one of the famed Longquan sword makers in Lishui, China. I wish I could tell you that they were making swords of legendary fame. I don't know, and I suspect there was an element of the tourist trade involved in their production. Be that as it may, I can assure you they cut with ease—a testament I can verify by how easily one cut my finger before I realized just how sharp it really was. In a different part of the compound however, a different sword—perhaps destined for some imaginative boy—would not have damaged a marshmallow. Stacks and stacks of swords, each stack for a different purpose and with a different design, were distributed in the dozen or so buildings that surrounded the central compound.



As much as the swords were fascinating, the shops and the craftsmen were moreso. By the wear on the walls, the depth of dusty metal filings on the floors, the deft skill with which each step in the process was executed by the various workers, the polished and refined details of production—by all of these the shapeless bars of steel transformed into the exquisite beauty of a finished blade. In my naiveté, I knew little of what I was watching and photographing, but even amidst my unanswered questions, I could recognize the skill of countless hours making these Longquan prizes.

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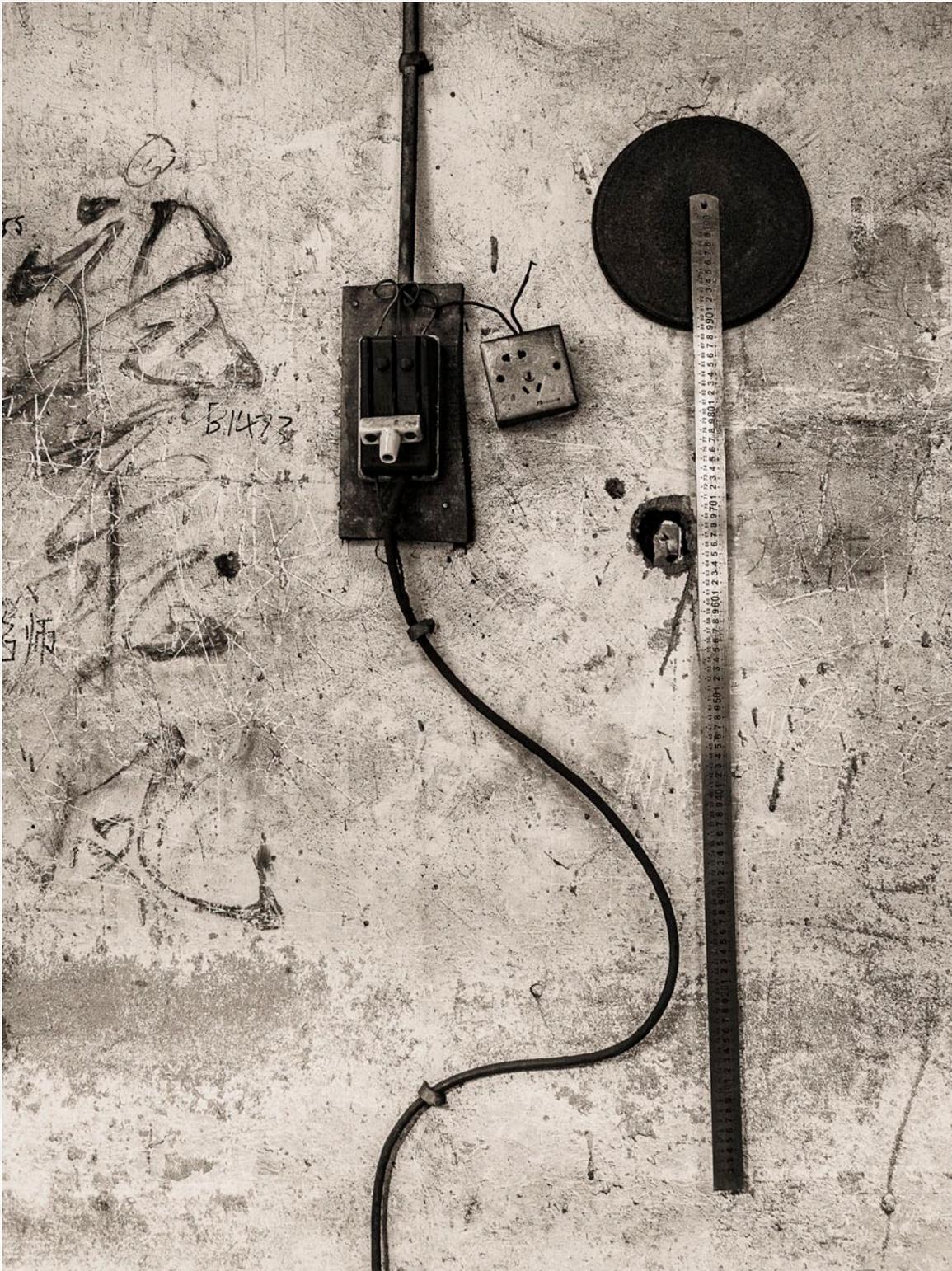


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Sketches

*An ePublication Series by
Brooks Jensen*

Longquan Swords

First Edition, July 2012

All images and text © 2012 Brooks Jensen
www.brooksensenarts.com

Published and produced by
Brooks Jensen
Anacortes, Washington, USA



This project has also been published as a collectible
handmade artist's chapbook of 10 pages.

For more information and purchasing options,
visit www.brooksensenarts.com

Layout and design completed during July 2012.